

# Zen and the Art of Sponsorship

*“God, Make me a  
Channel of Thy Peace...”*

-- St. Francis Prayer

To be a channel is to allow what is being channeled to flow through. If it is water, it must include input and outflow. In Sponsorship, it must provide the principles as received into your life through your Sponsor, your experience within the Program, and carrying that message to those you would sponsor.

## How to Not Know

The most difficult answer for any alcoholic is “I don’t know,” but it is “not knowing” that opens the possibility of learning. Even the answer that was perfect yesterday may not be the right answer for today.

Your sponsee will learn more about truth if you say “I don’t know, let’s find someone with experience with that,” and you seek the answer with your sponsee. If you search together through the tools available to you - through prayer, literature, the fellowship, and professional sources - your sponsee will learn how to find an answer by experience and improvisation.

To “not know” is to agree to be a student and makes it possible for you and your sponsee to learn from your Higher Power.

“Not Knowing” how to live without a drink brought you to your Recovery. Recognition of your own limits and the willingness to find the new answer will improve your own recovery and offer your Sponsee

Some groups and sponsors use “Rev. Mychal’s Prayer”

*“God, take away everything  
I think I know about you  
and About me, and  
teach me.”*

## Essential Sponsorship

Sponsorship is a concept of one member of the program helping another member of the program through the process of the Steps and applying those Steps and principles into their daily life.

Sponsorship requires the ability to see the Now and use the Program to help the sponsee (sometimes called “pigeon,” “baby,” “cookie,” or “protégé”) to move through the recovery process using the Twelve Steps.

## Essential Improvisation

Improvisation is a specific way of approaching theater, based on the book “Improvisation for the Theatre” by Viola Spolin. Today, improvisation is best known through improv comedy, such as Saturday Night Live or The Second City.

The essence of improvisation is always to support – never deny -- what came before. There is no “one size fits all” philosophy and there are countless ways to successfully carry the message to your Sponsee.

An attitude of Improvisation will allow you to take whatever progress the Sponsee makes with the Steps and application of those Steps to his/her

life as a way to learn the lesson before you, and then move on and move forward.

## Essential Zen

Zen is defined by the Free Online Dictionary as “Buddhist doctrine that enlightenment can be attained through direct intuitive insight.” Zen is not a religion. Zen is an approach based on recognition of the moment, the immediate moment, the “Now.”

Sponsorship is the challenge of matching the experience of the Sponsor with the situation of the Sponsee. Zen requires that you be focused on the Now, the Sponsee’s actions, and the tools of the Program, to eliminate the Actions that created the current situation, clean up the baggage of the past which interferes with life in the Now, and the Action required for the personal change Recovery demands.

Improvisation requires the Sponsor be armed with information and a wide variety of specific examples and answers that address the need of the Now. In the Big Book, it says “obviously you can’t carry something you haven’t got,” so it is necessary

that the Sponsor become saturated in varieties of material available in addition to the Sponsor’s own experience.

The combination of Sponsorship, Zen, and Improvisation allows the Sponsor to listen to the Sponsee, respond in a way that includes the “yes, and...” of Improv, and direct the Sponsee into new action to correct the actions and use the available tools, meetings, fellowship, prayer, literature, and phone - whatever suits the moment.

## Over-prepare

Get into your Program as never before. You will benefit and you will be amazed at how themes you find in reading, listening to speakers, attending discussion meetings, and conversations with other people in the Program will tie into the obstacles and questions in the “Now” of your sponsee and yourself.